

# Missouri Road Trip

## Every Hero Has A Story: Scott Joplin

**D**id you know Missouri had a king? Yes, “The King of Ragtime,” a talented musician and composer whose real name was Scott Joplin, spent a significant part of his life in Missouri and it was here he composed some of his most famous musical works.

As a young man, Joplin established roots in Sedalia, where his experimentation with musical rhythms led him to create his first well-known published work, the “Maple Leaf Rag.” The tune became a national sensation – even though mass media outlets such as radio didn’t exist.

Named for a nightclub in Sedalia, “Maple Leaf Rag” is said to be the first piece of American sheet music to sell more than 1 million copies!

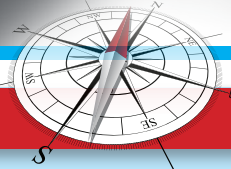
Buoyed by success, Joplin and his wife, Belle, moved to St. Louis in the spring of 1900. While living there, he produced some of his better known compositions: “The Entertainer,” “Elite Syncopations,” “March Majestic” and “Ragtime Dance.”

In 1907, Joplin moved to New York to increase national recognition and further his success. Sadly, the most ambitious work of his life – his opera, “Treemonisha” – failed and he eventually succumbed to disease in 1917, at the age of 49.

Ragtime saw renewed interest in the early 1970s when the motion picture “The Sting” used “The Entertainer” as its theme music. The movie won seven Academy Awards.



### Points of Interest



- ★ Scott Joplin attended George R. Smith College in Sedalia to study music. The college burned down in 1925.
- ★ Scott Joplin was inducted into the Hall of Famous Missourians in the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City in 1992.
- ★ In 1976, Joplin was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his contribution to American music.
- ★ Scott Joplin has a star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame in the Delmar Loop district. Learn more at [StLouisWalkofFame.org](http://StLouisWalkofFame.org).
- ★ The Friends of Scott Joplin organization works to preserve and promote the enjoyment of ragtime within the greater St. Louis area. Visit [FriendsOfScottJoplin.org](http://FriendsOfScottJoplin.org) for an events calendar.

Source: Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of State Parks



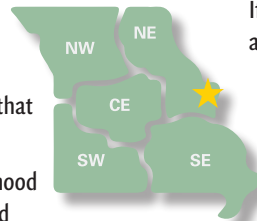
Scott Joplin House State Historic Site  
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## Take A Road Trip to St. Louis!

In 1976, Joplin’s St. Louis home was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and today is known as the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site. The home is furnished as it would have been in 1902 when Joplin was composing songs that would one day make him famous.

The visitor center exhibits depict St. Louis and the neighborhood as Joplin knew them, and additional details about his life and work. The operating player piano in the music room allows visitors to listen to piano rolls of the ragtime era, including some that were cut by Joplin himself.



If you have time, travel about 200 miles west of St. Louis to Sedalia, where Joplin attended high school and college and returned throughout his life. The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival is held there each June, and thousands of music lovers attend to hear performances by some of the best ragtime musicians in the world. Learn more at [ScottJoplin.org](http://ScottJoplin.org).



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